



...A United Voice for the Santa Ana River Watershed

OWOW STEERING COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

MAY 22, 2025

Committee Members	
<u>Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Representatives</u>	
Gil Botello, Convener, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District	Present
Philip E. Paule, Eastern Municipal Water District	Present
<u>County Supervisor Representatives</u>	
Vicente Sarmiento, Orange County Board of Supervisors	Absent
Amanda Carr, Orange County Public Works (OC Alternate)	Present
Karen Spiegel, Riverside County Board of Supervisors	Absent
Edward Coronado, Riverside County Board of Supervisors (Riverside Alternate)	Present
Jesse Armendarez, San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors	Absent
<u>County Municipal Representatives</u>	
Fred Jung, Orange County Municipal Representative	N/A
Wes Speake, Councilmember, City of Corona	Present
Vacant, San Bernardino County Municipal Representative	N/A
<u>Business Community Representative</u>	
James Hessler, Director of West Coast Operations, Altman Plants	Present
<u>Environmental Community Representative</u>	
Garry W. Brown, President, Orange County Coastkeeper	Absent
<u>Regional Water Quality Control Board Representative</u>	
William Ruh, Regional Water Quality Control Board	Present
John Scandura, Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB Alternate)	Present
Others Present	
<u>SAWPA COMMISSIONERS:</u>	Fred Jung, Jasmine Hall
<u>SAWPA STAFF:</u>	Haley Gohari, Ian Achimore, Jeff Mosher, Zyanya Ramirez
<u>OTHERS PRESENT:</u>	Aaron Echols, IERCD; Amber Smalley, Riverside County; Andrew D. Turner, Lagerlof LLP; Christy Suppes, Orange County Public Works; Kevin O'Toole, OCWD.

The OWOW Steering Committee meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m. by Gil Botello, Convener, at the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, 380 East Vanderbilt Way, San Bernardino, CA 92408.

1. CALL TO ORDER | PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE



2. **ROLL CALL**

An oral roll call was duly noted and recorded by the serving clerk.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments; there were no public comments received via email.

4. **ITEMS TO BE ADDED OR DELETED**

5. **CONSENT CALENDAR**

A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: FEBRUARY 27, 2025.

MOVED, approve the Consent Calendar.

Result:	Adopted by Roll Call Vote
Motion/Second:	Ruh/Speake
Ayes:	Botello, Carr, Coronado, Speake, Hessler, Ruh
Nays:	None
Abstentions:	None
Absent:	Armendarez, Brown, Paule, Sarmiento, Spiegel

6. **INFORMATIONAL REPORTS**

Recommendation: Receive for information.

A. **SANTA ANA RIVER HOMELESS SOLUTIONS COLLABORATIVE (SC#2025.4)**

Kayla Brown and Oscar Serrato of the Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District provided a presentation titled Santa Ana River Homeless Solutions Collaborative contained in the agenda packet on pages 13-33.

They highlighted the Collaborative's goals of rehousing encampment residents, removing and mitigating encampments, conducting clean-ups and habitat restoration, and creating tools to prevent encampments from reoccurring. Since Riverside County Parks began documenting encampments, approximately 800 have been plotted in the riverbed, but following a full sweep in April 2025, fewer than 80 active encampments remain. Strategies include data collection to track encampment "hot spots," bridging services such as connecting individuals with mobile mental health teams and safeguarding personal belongings, and coordinated clean-ups that first offer support services before removing hazardous materials and debris.

Additional efforts include hazardous condition announcements during storms and fires, collaboration with law enforcement to reduce off-highway vehicle activity and criminal incidents, and tributary restoration projects at Hidden Valley, Anza Creek, the SAR Corridor, and Sunnyslope Creek. From 2022 to 2025, these combined efforts have advanced both public safety and environmental restoration, while providing a framework for sustainable long-term management of the Santa Ana River and improved outcomes for unhoused individuals living along its banks.

Convener Botello praised the Collaborative's efforts and encouraged requested that they present at a future SAWPA Commission meeting.

This item was for discussion purposes; no action was taken on Agenda Item No. 6.A.



B. ONE WATER ONE WATERSHED PROJECT HIGHLIGHT – MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT OF ORANGE COUNTY (SC#2025.5)

The Municipal Water District of Orange County, along with regional partners, presented an update on its Regional Comprehensive Landscape Rebate Program, funded with \$2.77 million through Proposition 1 Round 1 IRWM grants under the OWOW program. The program has implemented a wide range of water efficiency improvements across the Santa Ana River Watershed, including turf and drip irrigation conversions, installation of smart timers and high-efficiency nozzles, landscape design assistance, rain barrels, native plants, and industrial-scale recycling and efficiency projects. These efforts have already converted over 7.5 million square feet of turf, installed more than 17,000 smart timers and 90,000 nozzles, and delivered significant industrial water savings, resulting in an estimated 2,697 acre-feet of potable water conserved annually. In addition to water supply benefits, the program has enhanced stormwater retention, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, supported pollinator habitat, and strengthened regional drought preparedness and climate resilience.

This item was for discussion purposes; no action was taken on Agenda Item No. 6.B.

C. SANTA ANA RIVER WATERSHED CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE PLAN TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING (SC#2025.6)

Haley Gohari provided a presentation titled Santa Ana River Watershed Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan – Technical Advisory Meeting #1 contained in the agenda packet on pages 55-63.

SAWPA staff have developed a Regional Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CARP) to complement the existing OWOW Plan. CARP aims to identify watershed-scale climate risks and vulnerabilities, create adaptation strategies, and develop a portfolio of resiliency projects that connect equity outcomes for underrepresented communities. The plan emphasizes multi-beneficial projects with diverse stakeholders, highlighting upstream and downstream interconnections while considering affordability and equitable outcomes. SAWPA, as the lead applicant, will oversee the project, supported by co-applicants ISC3, which manages community-based organizations and engagement, and Soboba, which provides tribal perspectives. The consultant Woodard & Curran will facilitate public agency engagement, data collection, and implementation support. The project received \$644,190 in grant funding through the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation's Regional Resilience Grant Program.

The Watershed Resilience Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held its first meeting on April 28, 2025. The TAC, consisting of representatives from water agencies, counties, energy, transportation, agriculture, regional councils, and environmental organizations, provides oversight, guidance, and technical input for the CARP. The first meeting introduced the CARP process, defined the TAC's role, and began visioning and goal-setting exercises, including data requests from public agencies to inventory climate adaptation efforts, vulnerabilities, and proposed projects. The meeting also outlined the engagement strategy, including workshops and surveys, to ensure the plan reflects diverse community and stakeholder perspectives. TAC Meeting #2 is scheduled for July 28, 2025, focusing on the Public Agency Engagement Plan and surveys.

Critical success factors for the CARP include leveraging existing technical information, ensuring active participation of diverse stakeholders across jurisdictions and sectors, and maintaining SAWPA's capacity for strategic facilitation, planning, communication, and leadership. The plan is designed to be community-informed, stakeholder-driven, and



implementation-focused, integrating adaptive management practices to enhance climate resilience for water resources, ecosystems, and communities throughout the watershed. By establishing a clear link between resilience initiatives and equitable outcomes, the CARP aims to provide tangible benefits to member agencies, cities, utilities, and communities while creating a pathway for future funding of resilience projects.

This item was for discussion purposes; no action was taken on Agenda Item No. 6.C.

7. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

There were no General Manager's Report.

8. CHAIR COMMENTS/REPORT

Convener Botello expressed his gratitude to everyone for attending the meeting.

9. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' COMMENTS

No additional comments.

10. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no requests for future agenda items.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ended at 11:55 a.m.

APPROVED: September 25, 2025

Signed by:

Gil Botello

Gil Botello, Convener

Attest:

Signed by:

Zyanya Ramirez

Zyanya Ramirez, Senior Administrative Specialist